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Operational Data

At the suggestion of [] [] proceeded to Trans-Jordan during the last week of April 1948. He was assisted in gathering material for this report by a young Trans-Jordanian in high standing with King 'Abdallah and who happens to be source's brother. In the course of the mission, source and his brother had two private, confidential meetings with the Trans-Jordanian King, meetings with several of the King's ministers, and an invitation from Glubb Pasha to visit him at his headquarters.

The King offered source an appointment in the Trans-Jordanian diplomatic service which he has not yet either accepted or rejected. On the whole the offer does not appeal to him greatly because of its low remuneration.

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Subject: Notes on a recent report No: M.J-334
Trip to Trans-Jordan Date of information: 25 April-1 May 1948
Place Required: Amman Date Required: 1 May 1948
Evaluation: B-0 Date of report: 6 May 1948
Source: []

1. King 'ABDALLAH is described by source as absolute monarch of Trans-Jordan and a man who exercises all authority associated with the word "king". He is said to be regarded both by himself and by others as superior in every way to all members of his entourage, and does not hesitate to exercise his constitutional powers over his government. In short, 'ABDALLAH is Trans-Jordan.

2. Through his direct and strong influence, the King has succeeded in creating the most homogeneous state in the Middle East. That few elements of opposition to his absolutism have shown themselves, at one time or another, were promptly suppressed. The King is said to be a good listener and to give the impression of accepting advice, but actually does not act unless and until he has made up his own mind. The one not big exception to this statement is the fact that he relies greatly on GLUEB Iasha.

'ABDALLAH's Present Plan for Palestine

3. During the week of 25 April-1 May 1948 'ABDALLAH had two private meetings with source. The King explained that Trans-Jordan is a small state which cannot exist unless supported by a strong outside power or expanded to include Mediterranean ports. While the King presently receives an annual British subsidy for his army amounting to £ 2,500,000, he reportedly realizes that this grant will not continue indefinitely. Since Trans-Jordan cannot support its army and administration from its own resources, 'ABDALLAH is said to see as its only solution the union of the eastern and western sides of the Jordan, which in his view are intrinsically parts of one country. To the west, in 'ABDALLAH's view, is the direction for his expansion.

4. According to 'ABDALLAH's plan, the problems peculiar to western Palestine, arising out of Jewish aspirations and Jewish presence there, should be solved along the lines of the autonomy which was granted to the Christians of Mount Lebanon after the massacres of 1860. Should the Jews not be amenable to this solution and should their military resistance prove too strong to be overcome by the forces at 'ABDALLAH's disposal, the King indicated that he

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would be willing to sit with the Jews at a round-table conference. In the strictest confidence, 'ABDALLAH reportedly indicated that he would be prepared to consider partition as a possible compromise. He has restricted the dissemination of this view very strictly, as he realizes that present Arab public opinion runs very high against partition and that the sudden increase in his popularity is in large measure engendered by his potential role of "Liberator" of the Arabs from Zionism following the failure of the Arab Liberation Army and the consequent emergence of the Arab Legion as the only Arab force at present capable of coping with Jewish forces.

Organization of Military Forces

5. Although it has not been generally revealed and in spite of indications to the contrary, 'ABDALLAH is said to have accepted the supreme command of all Arab forces now engaged in the Palestine campaign. Forces not yet in action in Palestine but which are now being prepared will also reportedly be under his command. Fawzi ANUKJI, who until now has been considered the instrument of the SHAMAH-BATTI group in Syria, has in fact allegedly been in secret and constant communication with 'ABDALLAH since the beginning of the Palestinian operations.

6. As a result of military developments in Palestine, Arab League circles are said to have come to the conclusion that the Arab Liberation Army, as presently constituted, is not a force successfully to combat Jewish forces. Reportedly in the view of GLUEB Pasha, one of its major weaknesses is the diversity of its arms and complete absence of standardization in its equipment. Another weakness, in his view, is said to be that the A.L.A. is neither a regular army nor a guerrilla force.

7. Since neither the Arab League nor its member states by virtue of international commitments can openly send regular troops into Palestine, the states are said to have agreed that such of their forces as do operate there shall be under the banner of Trans-Jordan, which is in a different international status. Source states that in addition to the legal difficulties in which the Arab States would be involved should they send regular troops into Palestine, certain of these states are also afraid to dispatch large contingents because of unsettled conditions at home.

8. The present plan for the Arab forces appears

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to be to form all irregulars from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine into the Arab Liberation Army, and to include the regulars from Iraq in the Arab Legion. Thus it appears that it is planned to incorporate all disconnected and semi-independent bands into the A.L.A. The detachment of the Iraqi army which will enter Palestine as part of the Arab Legion is a group of motorized units, which is now being concentrated in Trans-Jordan. While the strength of the Iraqi units has not been definitively decided, it is believed that a maximum of 12,000 men has been set.

9. It is reported that Saudi Arabia will not contribute men or arms, not only because of King 'Abd-al-'Aziz's antipathy to 'ABDALLAH but also because of international commitments. (See also RrJ-331). 'ABDALLAH believes that Egypt will contribute some arms and equipment, but will not encourage the participation of her forces directly in operations. She has, however, reportedly indicated to 'ABDALLAH's representative that she will contribute to the general offensive by concentrating a large part of her regular army along the southern frontier of Palestine and by maneuvering it along the border in order to immobilize a substantial part of the Jewish forces.

Funds

10. 'ABDALLAH, who has always been in financial distress, is said to have succeeded in convincing the Arab League to place at his disposal for the prosecution of the Palestine campaign L.E. 2,000,000, the so-called "Palestine Fund". He expects that the pressure of public opinion will result in further financial contributions from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. 'ABDALLAH is said to admit that he wished to establish a precedent should his British subsidy be cut off.

'Abdallah's position vis-a-vis the Palestinian Arabs and the Mufti.

11. The need of the Palestinian Arabs for new leadership, plus the potential military strength of the Arab Legion, is said to be turning the former toward 'ABDALLAH. The initiative in this direction, after due encouragement by agents whom 'ABDALLAH allegedly admits to having despatched, has been taken by the mayors of Beerseba, Nablus, and Hebron. The last are now said to be busy building up Arab public opinion to regard the King as the sole Arab liberator.

12. The long-standing enmity between 'ABDALLAH and the MUFTI is said to be as strong as ever and there seems to be little likelihood of their differences being reconciled. When sources asked 'ABDALLAH for his opinion of the MUFTI, the King allegedly replied, "Poor man, he's finished. He has tried his best, but now he has come to the end of his re-

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sources. I am sorry for him." Two factors have reportedly prevented the MUFTI from taking steps toward initiating a reconciliation with 'ABDALLAH: a) personal pride and fear of humiliation; b) the feeling that a visit to 'Amman would completely undermine his prestige and spell the end of his political ambitions. The MUFTI is said, therefore, to be playing a waiting game, and to be hoping that circles in Syria will thwart 'ABDALLAH's ambitions or that some outside element, with which he may be able to ally himself, may enter the arena. 'ABDALLAH believes that the traditional friendship between the MUFTI and IBN-SA'UD will yield no tangible result because the latter will not ally himself with a man whose star has sunk so low.

9. At present the MUFTI's only stronghold is in the city of Jerusalem, but even there his influence is diminishing. In order to eliminate this last source of the MUFTI's power and to enhance his own, 'ABDALLAH is said to be determined to make a symbolic entry into Jerusalem. As a sound student of Arab emotionalism, 'ABDALLAH is said to appreciate the highly volatile temperament of the Arab masses and therefore fears that if he does not now move to gain control of Jerusalem, Arab public opinion may veer away from him, even to the extent of blaming him for Arab reverses, and thus enable the MUFTI to regain lost power and prestige.

'Abdallah's Tactics

10. 'ABDALLAH appears to realize that he must be both patient and cautious, and that at this point he cannot make public the full extent of his intentions. In order to obtain the full support of other Arab states he must appear to take notice of their wishes. Therefore his publically avowed aim is to conquer Palestine on behalf of the Palestinian Arabs. This is said to be a sop to Arab public opinion, for source believes that once the King considers his position with regard to the Palestine issue secure politically and militarily, he will be prepared to halt his advance at the boundaries laid down by the U.N. Partition agreement. The King, an ardent chess player, likes to compare chess to politics. He allegedly told source, "In chess you do not bring into play at the beginning your heavy pieces, but you start by advancing your pawns into positions which will enable you, at the chosen moment, to strike with your heavier pieces to win an advantage. As in chess, so in politics, one must be patient and wary". The King is said to believe that his chosen moment has arrived.

11. Since 'ABDALLAH intends to use the present developments in Palestine to further his own plans for aggrandizement, he has taken care to maintain extremely cordial rela-

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relations with the Opposition in certain other Arab countries. He is on the best of terms with the Druze of Syria, who are said to be loyal to him rather than to the Syrian Government, and has even given sanctuary to the Amir Nuhad ARSLAN. The latter, leader of an abortive revolt against the Lebanese Government a few months ago, now allegedly occupies a suite in the Royal Palace in 'Amman.

Position of Cabinet Ministers

12. The King's ministers, who are constitutionally responsible to him alone and who hold their posts purely by his grace, are mere pawns in 'ABDALLAH's schemes. Little or no notice appears to be taken of their advice, although the King grants them hearings.

Position of Glubb Pasha

13. The principal advisor of 'ABDALLAH is GLUBB Pasha, without whose advice and agreement the King will reportedly not budge a fraction of an inch. The entire Bedu population of Trans-Jordan is said also to be blindly devoted to GLUBB and he to it. It is through GLUBB that the King reportedly exercises a strong hold over the tribes.

Foreign Relations

14. To soured the King summed up his attitude toward foreign relations by stating that small states cannot survive if they attempt to stand alone.

15. Britain

The King has complete and absolute confidence in British friendship and support, maintaining that Britain is fully aware that Trans-Jordan is the only reliable state in the Middle East as far as Britain is concerned and may serve as a bulwark of British imperial defenses. 'ABDALLAH is said to be further convinced that the British Government will go to almost any lengths to satisfy his wishes and requests, provided that in so doing she does not compromise herself internationally.

16. U.S.A.

As a result of the recent Anglo-Trans-Jordanian treaty, 'ABDALLAH feels that all his desires are fully catered to by the British, and he therefore is said to profess to be completely disinterested in any special relations with the United States. He reportedly stated that the U.S.A. can give him nothing which he cannot get from Great Britain.

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17. U.S.S.R.

'ABDALLAH is said to consider communism an evil, anti-Islamic movement and to spend some time writing treatises on the subject. Although one of his ministers, Sulayman SURKAR, is known to have been in contact with Soviet representatives in the Middle East, the King does not relish the thought of any relationship with Russia and indeed appears to resent strongly Russia's interest in the Middle East.

18. U.N.

'ABDALLAH loathes the U.N. "I spit when I hear the word," he told source. "According to the U.N., I am king of an unrecognized country".

19. Sa'udi Arabia

With Sa'udi Arabia, relations are cool and not apparently a source of undue worry to the King. He appears to believe that opposition to Trans-Jordanian expansion will not be serious from that quarter, in view of Sa'udi Arabia's international commitments, especially that to the U.S.A.

20. Egypt

"Egypt is bored with Palestine", the King remarked to source. 'ABDALLAH is said to believe that Egypt is mainly interested in her relationship to Sa'udi Arabia and has, moreover, considerable internal troubles. He therefore feels that she would be prepared to give him a free hand in Palestine, provided that he discards the Greater Syria scheme, which is opposed by King IBN-SA'UD.

21. Lebanon

In 'ABDALLAH's view the Lebanon relies on 'ABDALLAH as a means of countering Syrian pressure, and is therefore viewing with favor his lead on the Palestine issue. Further, the King believes, the Lebanon would welcome a speedy settlement of the Palestine question in view of her internal factional strife and financial instability which make her commitments for the Palestine cause somewhat of a strain.

22. Syria

Although the Syrian Government in general and the SHARAFI group in particular are said to view 'ABDALLAH's moves in Palestine with apprehension, he believes that they are

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presently in no position to check him, due to the reverses suffered by the A.L.A. Neither is the Syrian Government, in his opinion, in a position to strengthen her contributions of arms and men because of internal trouble arising from unrest among the Drus and other minorities, and because of economic confusion and financial hardships. Syria, he believes, also hopes that if his hands are full in Palestine, he will neglect his Greater Syria plans.

Note: Source at a near date will submit further information on Sulayman SUKKAH and his pro-Russian activities.

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